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Georgios KARDARAS, Kamilla YUSUPOVA

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ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
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RUS' PRIMARY CHRONICLE

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The *Povest' vremennykh let* (*Russian/Rus' Primary Chronicle, Tale of Bygone Years* or *Chronicle of Nestor* etc.), dated between 1113 and 1118, and covering the period from 852 to 1110, is the most valuable source both for the history of the early tribes of Eastern Europe as well as the circumstances of the first state formation (that of Kievan Rus') in the region. With regard to the numerous suggestions and debate over the identity of the author of the text (hereafter *RPC*), scholars initially attributed it to Nestor, a monk at the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev, although later theories focused on Sylvester, abbot at the Monastery of St. Michael in Vydubychi near Kiev. Taking into account the views of certain Eastern European scholars, A. A. Shakhmatov believes that monk Nestor compiled the first –and not preserved– redaction of the *RPC* in 1113, while the second redaction was completed by abbot Sylvester in 1116, a hypothesis based on Sylvester's postscript on the *RPC*. A. A. Gippius, along with P. P. Tolocko, O. V. Tvorogov and S. M. Mikheev, consider as *terminus post quem* for Sylvester's postscript the year 1110. According to S. M. Mikheev's investigation on the textual history of the *RPC* and the composition of its various parts, an initial *Old Saga* (*Drevnee skazanie*) was produced in Kiev c. 1016/17 and was extended into *Nikon's Compilation* (*Svod Nikona*), c. 1078/79. A new enriched version, the *Initial* or *Beginning Compilation* (*Nachal'nyj svod*), appeared between 1093 and 1115, while in 1116 abbot Sylvester revised the *Initial Compilation* and compiled the *Tale of Bygone Years*, a text copied and supplemented the following year (*Redaction of 1117*). On the other hand, excerpts from the manuscripts of the *Initial Compilation* and the *Old Saga* were used as the

basis for the *Novgorod Annals* that are reproduced in the *Novgorod First Chronicle*¹.

Being one of the so-called ‘national Chronicles’ in Eastern Europe, the *RPC* legitimizes ideologically the integration of the Rus’ into the Christian world (*οἰκουμένη*) by the Rurikids and, on the other hand, provides the geographical and ethnological map of Kievan Rus’ and its surroundings².

1. See mostly the detailed study of *С. М. Анхачев*, *Что писал «Повесть временных лет»?», [СЛАВЯНО-ГЕРМАНИСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ Т. 6]*, Moscow 2011. See also, *О. В. Творогов*, *Повесть временных лет*, in: Библиотека литературы Древней Руси, eds *Д. С. Анхачев et al.*, Т. 1: XI–XII, Saint-Petersburg 1997, 487–489. *А. Я. Шахматов*, *История русского летописания*, Т. 1: *Повесть временных лет и древнейшие русские летописные своды*. Кн. 1: *Разыскания о древнейших русских летописных сводах*, Saint-Petersburg 2002, 23–24. *А. Я. Гнпшнц*, *В проблеме редакций повести временных лет*, *Славяноведение* 5 (2007), 20–44. *П. Толочко*, *Редакция Повести временных лет игумена Сильвестра: историческая реальность или ученая фикция?*, *Ruthenica* 7 (2008) [до 100-летия «Разысканий» *О.О. Шахматова*], 130–139. *А. Г. Бобров*, *В поисках Нестора. Полемика к комментариям*, in: *Повесть временных лет*, trans. *Д. С. Анхачев – О. В. Творогов*, Saint-Petersburg 2012, 384–389 (hereafter, *ПВЛ*). For further literature, see *D. Ostrowski*, *Pagan past and Christian identity in the Primary Chronicle*, in: *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070–1200)*, ed. *I. H. Garipzanov*, Turnhout 2011, 230–236, 252. *Idem*, *The “enclosed people” of the Revelations of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara in the Povest’ vremennykh let*, in: *Philology Broad and Deep: In Memoriam Horace G. Lunt*, eds *M. S. Flier – D. Birnbaum – C. M. Vakareliyska*, Bloomington 2014, 219. *M. Font*, *The structure and authenticity of the Povest’ vremennykh let*, *Studia Slavica Hungarica* 58/2 (2013), 345–364, who, following the view of many eastern European scholars, attributes to Sylvester, abbot of the monastery of Vyduhichi, the second redaction of the *Chronicle* in the era of Vladimir Monomakh (1113–1125), mixing different traditions and creating the dynastic legitimization in the person of Monomakh. *М. Ю. Андреева*, *Образы иноверцев в Повести временных лет* (Ph.D. Dissertation), Moscow 2017, 27–28.

2. *J. H. Lind*, *Problems of Ethnicity in the Interpretation of Written Sources on Early Rus’*, in: *The Slavization of the Russian North. Mechanisms and Chronology*, ed. *J. Nuorluoto*, Helsinki 2006, 249–252. *О. П. Толочко*, *The Primary Chronicle’s ‘Ethnography’ Revisited: Slavs and Varangians in the Middle Dnieper Region and the Origin of the Rus’ State*, in: *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs. Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe*, eds *I. H. Garipzanov – P. J. Geary – P. Urbanczyk*, Turnhout 2008, 178, 180. *G. Majeska*, *Rus’ and the Byzantine Empire*, in: *A Companion to Russian History*, ed. *A. Gleason*, Oxford 2009, 57. *Ostrowski*, *Pagan past*, 229–230, 238, 245–250. *M. Isoaho*, *The Last Emperor in the Primary Chronicle of Kiev*, in: *Past and Present in Medieval Chronicles*,

In other words, the *Chronicle* is nothing but an *origo gentis* of the Kievan Rus' (or other nations) with limited credibility³. For the composition of the *Chronicle* –in which there are extensive references to Byzantium and Byzantine-Rus' relations–, the *RPC* uses narrative models and testimonies from the Byzantine literature, part of which had already been translated into Church Slavonic. His main sources, as the author notes, are the *Chronography* of George the Monk and the *Chronography* of John Malalas, the *Chronographikon Syntomon* of Nikephoros, patriarch of Constantinople, the texts of the Rus'-Byzantine treaties in 911 and 944 AD etc.⁴. The influence of the Byzantine chroniclers is also evident in the dating system followed by *RPC* (*Era of the World*, with references to the fifteen-year cycle of Indiction)⁵.

In the *RPC* the elements of the Syriac Church Literature for the barbarian peoples of the North (the so-called Apocalyptic Literature, with eschatological content), which influenced the Byzantine and Slavic Literature, are clearly visible. Such elements are traceable in works such as the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius/Methodius of Patara (late 7th century) and the *Myth of Alexander* (circa 629/30)⁶. A quite popular theme in the

ed. M. ISOAHO [*COLLEGIUM: Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences* v. 17], Helsinki 2015, 43.

3. TOLOCHKO, Slavs and Varangians, 188. J. KOMENDOVÁ, *Origo gentis* как способ выражения чуждости в древнейшем русском летописании, *Slavia Orientalis* 67/4 (2018), 573-581.

4. *Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian text*, ed.-trans. S. H. CROSS – O. P. SHERBOWITZ-WETZOR, Cambridge (Mass.), 1953, 23-31 (hereafter, *RPC*). MAJESKA, Rus', 57. OSTROWSKI, Pagan past, 229, 253. IDEM, Revelations, 219. ISOAHO, The Last Emperor, 45, 49.

5. *RPC*, 30-35 237 n. 49. ПРД, 237-240.

6. ПРД, 366-367. W. BRANDES, Gog, Magog und die Hunnen: Anmerkungen zur eschatologischen 'Ethnographie' der Völkerwanderungszeit, in: *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1100*, eds W. POHL – C. GANTNER – R. E. PAYNE, Farnham, Burlington, VT, 2012, 487-491. OSTROWSKI, Revelations, 215-242. ISOAHO, The Last Emperor, 47-48, 74-75. C. JOUANNO, *Naissance et métamorphoses du Roman d'Alexandre. Domaine Grec*, Paris 2002, 280, 309-313, 463 [= greek trans. M. LOUKAKI, Athens 2015, 476, 492-499, 728]. For the *Myth of Alexander*, see also J. P. MONFERRER-SALA, Alexander the Great in the Syriac Literary Tradition, in: *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. Z. D. ZUWIYYA, Leiden – Boston, 2011, 41-72. Z. A. BRZOZOWSKA, Who Could 'the Godless Ishmaelites from the Yathrib Desert'

Apocalyptic Literature, and in various versions, is the exclusion of twenty-two “unclean nations” from Alexander the Great, who, after carrying them from the East to a mountain in the North, enclosed them behind bronzen doors (points identified with the Caucasus and Caspian Gates respectively). In other traditions, however, they are referred to as descendants of Ishmael and include, among others, the peoples of the steppe⁷. Under the influence of Pseudo-Methodius, the author of the *RPC* identifies populations of the Northwest Urals with the “unclean nations” who are descended from Japheth⁸. The background of the relevant descriptions are the biblical references to the mythical peoples Gog and Magog, who lived north of the Caucasus and their name was synonymous with destruction, a theme equivalent to the morals of nomadic peoples in the historiography of Antiquity⁹.

According to Pseudo-Methodius, two disasters will occur at the end of the world, first by the Ishmaelites and then by the grandsons of Japheth, who are Gog and Magog, as well as the confined by Alexander “unclean nations”¹⁰. Additionally, recording their barbaric customs, he states that “for the nations coming from the North eat the flesh of men and drink the blood of beasts like water and eat unclean things: snakes and scorpions and all abominable and disgusting beasts and the reptiles that creep upon the earth and brutal things and dead bodies and the aborted fetuses of women. And they will slaughter infants, even producing them from their wombs, and they will boil the meat and eat it. And they will corrupt the earth and befoul it and deface it, and there will be no one able to stand before them”¹¹.

Be to the Author of the Novgorod First Chronicle? The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius in Medieval South and East Slavic Literatures, *Studia Ceranea* 9 (2019), 369-370, 383.

7. OSTROWSKI, Revelations, 218-219. JOUANNO, *Naissance et metamorphoses*, 309-310, 313, 314-315, 383-384 [= greek trans. 488-491, 498, 503-505, 640-644]. B. GARSTAD, Alexander’s Gate and the Unclean Nations: Translation, Textual Appropriation, and the Construction of Barriers, *Transcultural* 8/1 (2016), 5-16. BRZOWSKA, Godless Ishmaelites, 383-384.

8. *RPC*, 184-185. Иꙗꙗ, 150-151. OSTROWSKI, Revelations, 223-225.

9. BRANDES, Gog, Magog, 490. OSTROWSKI, Revelations, 223-224. ISOAHO, Last Emperor, 51-53, where the equivalent demonization of the Rus’ during their conflicts with the Byzantines in Sviatoslav’s era, between 968 and 971. JOUANNO, *Naissance et metamorphoses*, 309-313 [= greek trans. 488-489].

10. See OSTROWSKI, Revelations, 221. JOUANNO, *Naissance et metamorphoses*, 312, 313-314, 384 [= greek trans. 497, 501, 644].

11. *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrian World Chronicle*, ed.- trans. B.

On the other hand, *The Legend of Alexander*, recording the cruelty of the Huns, presents the killing of embryos as part of a ritual practice¹².

In the *RPC*, the mythical elements about the “unclean nations” are mixed with eschatological Christian perceptions about the Second Coming and the end of the world, as well as the idea that God would send a pagan barbarian people to punish the Christians¹³. This providential threat is projected through the nomads Polovtsians (also known as Cumans¹⁴), who will punish the Christians Rus’ “for their sins”, a popular motif in Christian literature for the barbarian peoples. The tradition about the Ishmaelites, the “unclean nations” and the bronze doors, is recorded by *RPC* on the occasion of the attack of the Polovtsians in 1096. In the *RPC* author’s view, the Polovtsians are identified with the Ishmaelites and represent the fierce and warlike descendants of the biblical Ishmael¹⁵. It should be also noted that in the thirty-two references of the term *pagan/s* in the *RPC*, thirteen concern the Polovtsians, who in three other cases are described as *atheists*¹⁶. Further, following the model of *The Last Emperor* in the *Apocalypse*, the *RPC* attributes that role to the princes Sviatopolk (1093–1113) and Vladimir Monomakh (1113–1125), who fought the Polovtsians under the protection of Archangel Michael. Simultaneously, the perception of the *chosen people* for the Rus’, who fight their pagan opponents in the name of the true God, is introduced here¹⁷.

GARSTAD, Cambridge (Mass.) – London 2012, I, 3.20, 62-63. BRANDES, Gog, Magog, 490-491. JOUANNO, *Naissance et metamorphoses*, 312, 382 [= greek trans. 501, 641].

12. *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac Version of Pseudo-Callisthenes*, ed.-trans. E.A.W. BUDGE, Cambridge 1889, 151. BRANDES, Gog, Magog, 487-488. JOUANNO, *Naissance et metamorphoses*, 311 [= greek trans. 493].

13. ISOAHO, *Last Emperor*, 55.

14. The Polovtsians, who lived in the south-Russian steppes, were for a long time the most important enemy in the rear of Kievan Rus’. See O. PRITSAK, *The Polovtsians and Rus*, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982), 321-380.

15. *RPC*, 147-148, 182-187, 212-214. ПЛЛ, 114, 149-154, 180, 349. SZ. KOVÁCS, *The Origin of the Cumans in the Russian Primary Chronicle*, *Chronica. Annual of the Institute of History, University of Szeged* 11 (2011), 125-134. OSTROWSKI, *Pagan past*, 253. BRZOZOWSKA, *Godless Ishmaelites*, 383, 385.

16. OSTROWSKI, *Pagan past*, 244, 246-247.

17. ISOAHO, *Last Emperor*, 53, 56, 73-75.

The comparison of barbarians with wolves in Byzantine sources also strikes a negative tone¹⁸. With wolves likens the Polovtsians Vladimir Monomach in his *Instruction*¹⁹, while the *RPC* uses that comparison for a certain person. In the year 945, when the envoys of the Derevlans arrived at the Rus' court, Princess Olga inquired why they came to her. The Derevlans replied that they had murdered her husband Igor because he looked like a wolf and was crafty and greedy²⁰. By contrast, for the Cumans, namely the chieftain Bonyak, the *RPC* follows the historiographical motif of lycanthropy²¹, based likely on a similar reference of Pseudo-Caesarius for the Early Slavs (*Sclaveni*). Pseudo-Caesarius (one of the sources of the *RPC* along with George the Monk), inspired by the Syriac tradition, attributed to the Early Slavs a set of “barbaric customs including that of infanticide and the eating of wild animals”²². In addition, the *RPC* quotes a fragment from

18. A. KALDELLIS, *Ethnography after Antiquity. Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature*, Pennsylvania 2013, 130-137.

19. *RPC*, 213: *The Polovcians showed their teeth at us, as they stood like wolves at the fords and in the hills.*

20. *RPC*, 79. ΠΕΛ, 38. A. ΚΟΡΤΕΒ, *Ritual and History: Pagan Rites in the Story of the Princess' Revenge (the Russian Primary Chronicle, under 945–946)*, *Mirator* 11/1 (2010), 1, 25.

21. *RPC*, 196: *While on their journey, they pitched a bivouac, and at midnight Bonyak arose and rode away from the troops. He straightway began to howl like a wolf, till first one and then many wolves answered him with their howls.*

22. Caesarius, *Four Dialogues* ed. J. P. MIGNÉ [PG 38], Paris 1862, II, 110, col. 985: πῶς δ' ἐν ἐτέρῳ τμήματι ὄντες οἱ Σκλαυηνοὶ καὶ Φυσιωνῖται, οἱ καὶ Δανούβιοι προσαγορευόμενοι, οἱ μὲν γυναικομαστοβοροῦσιν ἠδέως, διὰ τὸ πεπληρωθῆαι τοῦ γάλακτος, μῶν δίκην τοὺς ὑποτίθους ταῖς πέτραις ἐπαράττοντες οἱ δὲ καὶ τῆς νομίμης καὶ ἀδιαβλήτου κρεωβορίας ἀπέχονται; Καὶ οἱ μὲν ὑπάρχουσιν αὐθάδεις, αὐτόνομοι, ἀνηγεμόνευτοι, συνεχῶς ἀναιροῦντες, συνεσθιόμενοι ἢ συνοδεύοντες, τῶν σφῶν ἡγεμόνα καὶ ἄρχοντα, ἀλώπεκας καὶ τὰς ἐνδρῦμους κάττας καὶ μονιοὺς ἐσθιόντες, καὶ τῇ λύκων ὠρυγῇ σφᾶς προσκαλούμενοι οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀδηφαγίας ἀπέχονται, καὶ τῷ τυχόντι ὑποπατόμεοι καὶ ὑπέικοντες; (And how is occurring, those living on either side of the river, the *Sclaveni* and *Fysonites*, who are called *Danoubians*, the former to devour pleasantly female breasts when they are full of milk, and fly breastfed infants in stones like rats, and the latter abstain even from lawful and permissible meat eating? Why the former are wild, autonomous and not dominated by someone and constantly kill the ruler and lord when they eat together or when they follow him? Why they eat foxes, wildcats and boars and call each other by imitating the howl of the wolves, while the latter abstain from any kind of voracity and obey and subjected

the *Chronicle* of George the Monk on the traditional barbarian customs that violated the statute law, among them as murder and incest. Among the peoples practicing these customs are reportedly the Indians, where cannibalism (anthropophagy) is observed, the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, and the Britons. On the other hand, a more positive image emerges for the Syrians and the Brahmins²³.

Based on George the Monk and, secondly, on Pseudo-Caesarius, the *RPC* treats the tribes of Kievan Rus' during the pagan period in a negative way: “а Древлане жнѣваху зѣрнньскимъ шеразомъ. жноуше екоутьски. оубнѣваху другъ друга. ѣдаху вса нечисто. и брака оу нихъ не вѣкаше. но оумзикнѣваху оу водѣ дѣца. и Радимичи и Вятичи. и Гѣверъ. шдинъ шезичан нмаху жнѣваху в лѣтѣ. ѣкоже [и] всакни зѣрѣ. ѣдуше все нечисто ... нзинѣ. си же творѣху шезичанъ Кривичи. [и] прочни поганин. не вѣдуше закона Бжѣа. но творѣше сами собѣ законъ.”²⁴. The Polovtsians

to the first man they meet?). С. Я. НЕЯНОВ, ПСЕВДО-КЕСАРИЙ, in: *Свод древнейших письменных известий о Славянах*, v. I (I-VI вв.), eds Л. Я. ГИНДИН – С. Я. НЕЯНОВ – Г. Г. АНТЯВРИН, Moscow 1991, 251-259. G. KARDARAS, Pseudo-Caesarius on the early Slavs? A reconsideration from the cultural point of view, in: *Multikulturalis'm i Mnogoezitsie. The Thirteenth International Slavic Studies Conference, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, April 21-23th 2016*, v. 2 (Antropologija. Literaturoznanie), eds DOBROMIR GRIGOROV et al., Veliko Tarnovo 2017, 89-90, where one can find all the older literature. ЯНДРЕЙЧЕВА, ОБРАЗЫ, 42-56, who also names Palladius of Elenopolis (*On the Peoples of India and the Brahmins*) as one of the sources of the *RPC*. On the relevant sources, see also М. Ю. ЯНДРЕЙЧЕВА, Этнографическое описание восточных славян в космографическом введении Повести временных лет, *Диалог со временем* 58 (2017), 155-180.

23. *RPC*, 57-58. ПБЛ, 15, 233. OSTROWSKI, Pagan past, 246. ЯНДРЕЙЧЕВА, ОБРАЗЫ, 24-33, 36-40, 51-52. See also, KARDARAS, Pseudo-Caesarius, 93-94.

24. Лѣтопись по Лаврентьевскому списку (Полное собрание русских летописей., Томъ первый Лаврентьевская летопись Вып. 1), Leningrad 1926, col. 13-14. (hereafter, ЛЛС). *RPC*, 56-57: *The Derevlans, on the other hand, existed in bestial fashion, and lived like cattle. They killed one another, ate every impure thing, and there was no marriage among them, but instead they seized upon maidens by capture. The Radimichians, the Vyatichians, and the Severians had the same customs. They lived in the forest like any wild beast, and ate every unclean things. ... Such customs were observed by the Krivichians and the other pagans, since they did not know the law of God, but made a law unto themselves.* ПБЛ, 15. ТОЛОЧКО, Slavs and Varangians, 179-180. ЯНДРЕЙЧЕВА, ОБРАЗЫ, 24, 32-35, 40-41, 44-46, 57-61, where possible parallels between certain peoples in the *RPC* author's sources and the Slavic tribes in Kievan Rus' as well as the Polovtsians (Derevlans – Indians; Radimichians and their

are presented in much the same way: “іакоже се и при насѣ нзидѣ Половци законѣ держати ѡцѣ своихъ: кровѣ проливати а хвалати се ѡ снхъ. [и] їадуше мерицькєчннѣ. и всю нечистотѣ. хомѣки и сѣлози. [и] поммають мачехи свои. [и] їацроби и ннзи ѡбзичаю отецѣ своихъ.”²⁵. The only exception concerns the Slavs Polianians in the Kiev region, who “retained the mild and peaceful customs of their ancestors”, and were in a sense the connecting link between two different eras (paganism and Christianity)²⁶. As M. J. Andreicheva points out, by correlating the Polianians with the “Brahmans” and the Fisonites, the author of the *RPC* emphasized their importance and their role in the future Christianization of the Old Russian lands. Having a special power to fulfill “God’s destiny”, the Polianians were given a key role in the *Chronicle* regarding both the Christianization of the Eastern Slavs and the formation of the Old Russian *ѣθνος*²⁷.

In addition to the above, the *RPC* also adopts the Syriac historiographical tradition concerning the division of the world among the three sons of Noah after the cataclysm, and the presence of the Slavs in the territory of Japheth, a tradition also used by George the Monk²⁸. According to Syriac authors, who followed the relevant Judaic and Christian traditions, the Slavs were descended from Japheth and lived in the northeastern part of the world (*οἰκουμένη*), next to the Sarmatians and Bulgars²⁹. The author of the *RPC* accepts this version noting “these are the narratives of bygone years regarding the origin of the land of Rus’, the first Princes of Kiev, and

neighbors – Indians, Amazons and partly the Britons; Polovtsians – Chaldeans, Babylonians and Indians; the positive connection concerns the Polianians with the Syrians, the Brahman and the Phisonites).

25. *ΛΛ*, col. 16. *RPC*, 58: *Just so, even in our own day, the Polovcians maintain the customs of their ancestors in the shedding of blood and in glorifying themselves for such deeds, as well as in eating every dead or unclean thing, even hamsters and marmots. They marry their mothers-in-law and their sisters-in-law, and observe other usages of their ancestors.* ПѠД, р. 16, 233. OSTROWSKI, *Pagan past*, 246. Андрейчева, *Образы*, 34-36.

26. *RPC*, 56. ПѠД, 14-15. TOLOCHKO, *Slavs and Varangians*, 180. Андрейчева, *Образы*, 23, 29-30, 35-36.

27. Андрейчева, *Образы*, 59.

28. See *RPC*, 23. ПѠД, 184, 197.

29. S. BEDNAROWICZ, *Syriaco-Slavica*. What did the Syriac medieval writers know about the Slavs, *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia* 2 (2010), 40-41. KARDARAS, *Pseudo-Caesarius*, 93.

старѣншаго· и нарекоша имя ѿмѹ Кнѣзѣ· [и] баше около града рѣсѣ и борѣ великѣ· и башѹ ловаца звѣрь башѹ мужи мѹдри и смзилени [и] нарицахѹца Полане· ѿ ннхже сѣтъ Полане в Кнѣзѣ и до сего днѣ”³⁴. Kiy reportedly travelled to Constantinople, although this testimony is probably fictional, as is the connection of the three brothers with the names of the three hills³⁵. In another dynastic legend included in the *Chronicle* we come across a similar pattern, although this time the protagonists are two –instead of three– brothers: “баша бо ·ѣ· брата в Лавѣх· Радимѣ· а другому вѣтко и пришедѣша· рѣдогта Радимѣ на Сѣжю· [и] прозв[а]шала Радимичи· а вѣтко рѣде сѣ родомѣ своимѣ по Оцѣ· ѿ негоже прозвѣшала вѣтичи”³⁶.

The main ethnogenetic myth, however, is that of the Rus’ themselves. In this case, scholars, in search of similar narrative models, turned their attention to the Western medieval literature. The mythical narration, also known as “calling of the Princes”, concerns the request made by certain eastern European tribes to the Varangian Rus’ (who lived in present-day Sweden) to send them a ruler. According to the *RPC*, in the year 859 the Varangians imposed a tax on five tribes (Chud, Slavs of Novgorod, Meria, Ves and Krivitsians). Three years later, in 862, four tribes, the Chud, the Slavs of Novgorod, the Ves and the Krivitsians (among them, the author of the *RPC* believes that only the second and the latter were of Slavic origin), refused to pay tribute to the Varangians and chased them out “beyond the sea”. At the same time, however, they decided to send an embassy to the latter with a very important demand: “вѣа зѣмла наша велика и обилна· а

34. *ЛДГ*, col. 9. *RPC*, 54: *there were three brothers, Kiy, Shchek, and Khoriv, and their sister was named Lybed’. Kiy lived upon the hill [i.e. Kievitsa] where the Borichev trail now is, and Shchek dwelt upon the hill now named Shchekovitsa, while on the third resided Khoriv, after whom this hill is named Khorevitsa. They built a town and named it Kiev after their oldest brother. Around the town lay a wood and a great pine-forest in which they used to catch wild beasts. These men were wise and prudent; they were called Polyanians, and there are Polyanians descended from them living in Kiev to this day.* ПРД, 13. LIND, *Problems of Ethnicity*, 257.

35. *RPC*, 54-55. ПРД, 13, 223-227, 236.

36. *ЛДГ*, col. 12. *RPC*, 56: *There were in fact among the Lyakhs two brothers, one named Radim and other Vyatko. Radim settled on the Sozh’, where the people are known as Radimichians, and Vyatko with his family settled on the Oka. The people there were named Vyatichians after him.* ПРД, 14, 231-232.

нарада въ немъ нѣтъ: да поидѣте княжити и володѣти нами и избѣрациса ѿ братъю: с родзи сконми. [и] поѣша по собѣ всю Русь и придоша старѣишини Рюрикъ [сѣде Новѣгородѣ], а другии Гинеусъ на Бѣлѣозерѣ: а третии Изборскѣ.”³⁷ In view of the relevant testimony of the *RPC* scholars have long debated whether a Scandinavian element participated or not in the formation of Kievan Rus’ (the dispute between the Normanist and Anti-Normanist theories)³⁸. At this point we may note that the author of the *RPC* uses the name *Rus’* to denote either the Varangians or, later, the new people, that of Kievan Rus’ (an ethnonym or a state formation), who emerged in Eastern Europe as a result of the ethnic mixing between Varangians and the local, mostly Slavic, tribes³⁹.

According to O. Pritsak, there is an important difference between the *RPC* and the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, according to which the “calling of the Princes” was made not by tribes but by inhabitants of cities. What is more, the fact that three Scandinavian rulers arrived and settled in these particular areas has led the scholar to suggest that the invitation was addressed by the inhabitants of Staraya Ladoga, a city located nearby Novgorod (Rurik), Beloozero (Sineus) and Izborsk (Truvor). These cities were controlled by the Chud, the Ves and the Slavs of Novgorod respectively⁴⁰. On the other hand, while rejecting any possible influences of Western sources to the “calling of the Princes” (as e.g. the *Chronicle* of Widukind), D. Nikolayev formulated a rather attractive hypothesis which draws a comparison between the *RPC* and the legendary account of a rebellion found in the Irish poem *Sóerchlanda Érenn uile* (probably of the early 12th century). This rebellion broke out

37. ЛЛГ, col. 20. *RPC*, 59: “Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us”. These Varangians thus selected three brothers who migrated, along with their kinsfolk, across the sea. The oldest, Rurik, established himself at Novgorod; the second, Sineus, at Beloozero; and the third, Truvor, at Izborsk. ПРД, 17. O. PRITSAK, The Invitation to the Varangians, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 1 (1977), 7. J. MARTIN, The First East Slavic State, in: *A Companion to Russian History*, ed. A. GLEASON, Oxford 2009, 36-37.

38. See ПРД, 242-247. R. ZAKHARII, *The Historiography of Normanist and Anti-Normanist theories on the origin of Rus’*. A review of modern historiography and major sources on Varangian controversy and other Scandinavian concepts of the origins of Rus’ (Dissertation), Oslo 2002. MARTIN, Slavic State, 37-40.

39. БИЛАНДА – НИКОЛАЕВ, Русь, 140-146, 155.

40. PRITSAK, Invitation, 11-22.

due to the heavy taxation and the oppressive rule of the leader and can be summarized as follows: some tribes in Ireland, were subjected to a foreign ruling class, decided to overthrow it as they were dissatisfied. The ruling class was almost exterminated, and only three pregnant women managed to escape to Scotland. The Irish tribes, however, suffering various deprivations and realizing that they cannot govern themselves, decided to search for good rulers who would be accepted by all. For this reason they send an embassy “beyond the sea” and asked the three Princes –legitimate successors now– to return to Ireland; the latter, accepting the invitation and dividing the country among themselves, concluded a treaty with the local tribes, thereby becoming the founders of the Irish dynasty⁴¹.

Without ignoring the obvious similarities between the “calling of the Princes” and the Irish poem, we may here suggest that, apart from the aforementioned Byzantine sources (Theophanes Confessor and Constantine Porphyrogenitus), another main pattern for the formation of an ethnogenetic myth of the Rus’ by the author of the *RPC* derives from early medieval Western historiography. At this point, we can turn our focus on the *Chronicle* of Fredegar (c. 660), which is the main source of information for the short-lived hegemony of Samo (623-658). The Frankish Samo arrived with his retinue to the land of the *Winedi* “who are also called Slavs” (probably in present-day Bohemia) to trade with them, and soon thereafter these Slavs revolted against the Avars. After the successful outcome of the rebellion, the Slavs elected him as their ruler in recognition of his abilities. According to Fredegar, the Avars were wintering in the areas of the *Winedi* and, apart from their harvest, which they received as annual tribute, they also took their wives. The children who had been born by these Slav women were those who actually revolted against their fathers and shook off the Avar rule⁴². Considering the possible way of transmission and influences of

41. D. NIKOLAYEV, *Fír Flathemon in the Russian Primary Chronicle? The Legend of the Summoning of the Varangians and the Prefatory Matter to Audacht Morainn*, in: *Transforming Traditions: Studies in Comparative Linguistics, Literature and Folklore*, eds M. FOMIN – V. BLAŽEK – P. STALMASZCZYK, Łódź 2012, 113-126.

42. *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii libri quattor*, ed.-trans. A. KUSTERNIG, Darmstadt 1982, IV, 48, 206-210. W. FRITZE, *Untersuchungen zur frühslawischen und frühfränkischen Geschichte bis ins 7. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main 1994, 99-100. F. CURTA, Slavs in Fredegar and Paul the Diacon: medieval gens or “scourge of God”? *Early*

the *Chronicle* of Fredegar in the *RPC*, certain scholars assume that there is a direct connection between the two Chronicles with “intermediate” a lost Moravian source of the late ninth/early tenth century, or even that the dissemination of the first began with an abundance of ninth-century copies.⁴³

Although the description at first sight is not so similar to *Sóerchlanda Érenn uile*, the *Chronicle* of Fredegar was clearly familiar to the author of the *RPC*, as evidenced by the passage describing the oppression of the Slavs by the Avars. In his version, the author of the redaction replaces the *Winedi* with the Slavic tribe of *Dulebi*, who lived by the Bug River in Volhynia, and presents the Avars (*Obri*) as giants who deal with the consequences of the Divine Trial for what they committed against the Slavs: “и мало еґо не ѱаша си же доврѣ वोєваху на словѣнѣх· и примучиша д҃улѣбзи· суцаѱа словѣнзи· и насильє творяху женамз д҃улѣпъскимз· аце поѣхати е҃даше (Ве҃зрину· не дадаше взпрачи кона· ни кола· но велаше взпрачи ·ї· ли ·д҃· ли ·ѣ· ли· жєнз в телѣг҃у· и повєсти (Ве҃зрѣна· [и] тако м҃учаху д҃улѣбзи· бзиша во (Ве҃зрѣ тѣломз велци· и оумомь горди· и бз потребни· [и] помроша вси· и не вєстася ни єдинз· (Ве҃зринз· [и] єсть притѣча в Русѣ· и до сего д҃нє погнєоша аки (Ве҃рѣ· и҃же нѣѣ плємени ни наслѣдзика.”⁴⁴

From all of the above it becomes obvious that the author of the *RPC* draws various patterns from Byzantine and Western sources (especially the elements of Apocalyptic Literature), which he transforms and adapts to the peoples of his era. These elements reproduce a series of *cliches* concerning

Medieval Europe 6/2 (1997), 144-155, 163-164. M. EGGERS, Samo-“Der erste König der Slawen”. Eine kritische Forschungsübersicht, *Bohemia* 42 (2001), 63. W. POHL, *The Avars. A Steppe Empire in Central Europe, 567-822*, Ithaca NY – London 2018, 305-307.

43. See CURTA, Slavs in Fredegar, 150.

44. *AAO*, col. 11-12. *RPC*, 55-56: *They made war upon the Slavs, and harassed the Dulebians, who were themselves Slavs. They even did violence to the Dulebian women. When an Avar made a journey, he did not cause either a horse or a steer to be harnessed, but gave command instead that three of four or five women should be yoked to his cart and be made to draw him. Even thus they harassed the Dulebians. The Avars were large of stature and proud of spirit, and God destroyed them. They all perished, and not one Avar survived. There is to this day a proverb in Rus’ which runs, “They perished like the Avars”. Neither race nor heir of them remains.* *ПРД*, 14, 230-231. A. KOLLAUTZ, Nestors Quelle über die Unterdrückung der Duleben durch die Obri (Awaren), *Die Welt der Slawen* 27/2 (1982), 307-320. FRITZE, *Untersuchungen*, 100. CURTA, Fredegar, 150. POHL, *Steppe Empire*, 138-139.

the customs of barbarian peoples, which the *RPC* applies to the tribes of Eastern Europe. Additionally, the ethnogenetic traditions that he presents form the necessary background for the beginnings of different tribes or peoples. The influences of Byzantine literature suggest that the author of the *RPC* was also inspired by the ideological framework of the Byzantines, who set as their ultimate aim the gradual integration of all peoples into the Christian *οἰκουμένη*. In the case of the *RPC*, one can understand as *οἰκουμένη* the territory of Kievan Rus' at the time that its rulers, beginning with Vladimir, attempted to Christianize the tribes under their control. In this context, it is no mere coincidence that, when referring to the pagan Slavs, the *RPC* emphasizes customs that denote their barbarism and low cultural level, contrary to the Christian principles, in order to ideologically legitimize the integration of the Rus' into the Christian *οἰκουμένη* by the Rurikids. Although the *RPC* may be regarded as a Rus' *origo gentis*, the Christianization of the Eastern European tribes under the authority of the Kievan Princes is the turning point for their entry to civilization as well as their incorporation into the Christian *οἰκουμένη*.

ΠΡΟΤΥΠΑ ΤΗΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΥΤΙΚΗΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΟΓΡΑΦΙΑΣ
ΣΤΟ ΠΡΩΙΜΟ ΡΩΣΙΚΟ ΧΡΟΝΙΚΟ

Το *Πρώιμο Ρωσικό Χρονικό*, η μόνη πηγή αναφορικά με τις συνθήκες διαμόρφωσης της Ρωσίας του Κιέβου, εμφανίζει αρκετές επιρροές από τη βυζαντινή λογοτεχνία, καθώς και ορισμένες από τη Δύση. Πιθανόν όχι συμπτωματικά, όταν αναφέρεται στους παγανιστές Σλάβους, το *Χρονικό* δίνει έμφαση στα έθιμα που υποδηλώνουν βαρβαρότητα και χαμηλό πολιτισμικό επίπεδο και βρίσκονται σε αντίθεση με τις χριστιανικές αρχές. Η μελέτη εστιάζει στην πολυμορφία των ιστοριογραφικών προτύπων του *Χρονικού*, τα οποία αφορούν κυρίως: α) πρότυπα της συριακής εκκλησιαστικής ιστοριογραφίας (*κοινοί τόποι* για τους βαρβαρικούς λαούς και κατανομή του κόσμου από τους τρεις γιους του Νώε), τα οποία προέρχονται από τη βυζαντινή γραμματεία, β) τις ομοιότητες που παρατηρούνται μεταξύ του *Χρονικού* και των βυζαντινών πηγών ως προς την παράθεση εθνογενετικών μύθων, γ) την καταπίεση των Σλάβων από τους Αβάρους, η οποία αναφέρεται από τον Φρεδεγάριο. Η συνολική εξέταση των παραπάνω οδηγεί στο συμπέρασμα ότι ο συγγραφέας του *Χρονικού* ήταν σε θέση να μεταπλάσει και να προσαρμόσει στα δεδομένα της εποχής του τα ιστοριογραφικά πρότυπα που άντλησε από βυζαντινές και δυτικές πηγές, προβάλλοντας τη δική του εκδοχή για τα ήθη ή την προέλευση διαφόρων φύλων και λαών της Ανατολικής Ευρώπης. Επίσης, σε ιδεολογικό επίπεδο, ο εκχριστιανισμός των Ρως είναι το καθοριστικό σημείο για τη μετάβασή τους στον πολιτισμό και την ενσωμάτωσή τους στη χριστιανική *οικουμένη*.

